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DEPARTMENT FOR CA/VO/F/P AND CA/FPP  
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SUBJECT: CZECH REPUBLIC: FY2006 B VISA VALIDATION STUDY RESULTS

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\* Missing Section 001 \*  
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¶6. As to the question of average length of stay, post was surprised to find that only 1.5 percent of travelers reported staying longer than three months and would therefore have required a visa even under the VWP. Nearly 81 percent of those queried reported staying less than one month. Nearly 18 percent stayed 1-3 months. Consular officers note that anecdotal evidence contradicts these statistics. A relatively high number of visa applicants indicate on their applications or during the interview that they intend to stay more than a month. It also is common for retired Czechs go to visit their relatives in the United States and stay 3-6 months. One particular case from early December proves the point: A young non-immigrant visa applicant, who was gainfully employed and "looked good on paper," indicated on her DS-156 that she had been to the United States one time several years ago for two weeks. The consular officer was about to issue when he saw a CLASS hit indicating the applicant was an eight-year overstay and just returned to the Czech Republic this past year after self-deportation. On our validation study, she would have been classified as a "return" with a stay of two weeks.

STRONGEST INDICATORS: REGION, AGE, GENDER

¶7. Post grouped and evaluated validation study results by gender, age, region of residence, and occupation. Of the six confirmed overstays, four were from the economically depressed area of Northern Moravia, four were between 26 and 35, and five were male. This (save for gender) fits the profile of applicants who demand stronger scrutiny during interviews: those who have little higher education, live where there is high unemployment, and are relatively young. While the Czech Republic's economy is strong and its currency is gaining on both the dollar and the euro, a Prague newspaper report from November 2007 notes that Northern Moravia has an average unemployment rate of 10.2 percent, in sharp contrast to Prague's 2.4 percent and a nationwide average of 6.2. In addition, wages are still lower in the country compared to the United States and the rest of the EU. But the gap is narrowing. As wages increase, as unemployment in places like Prague decreases significantly, and as the currency strengthens (from 25 Czech crowns per dollar at the beginning of FY-06 to 18 today), illegal work in the United States looks less attractive to young people.

COMMENT:

¶8. The overstay rate of 0.6 percent, though lower than expected, is

well within the general positive trend of the last few years (2.4 percent in 2004, and 2.2 in 2005). This assessment also tracks well with the decline of the official B-visa refusal rate 11.7 percent in FY-04 to 6.7 percent in FY-07. The main take-away point of the validation study is that Czechs have a continuously improving low overstay rate that puts them well within the new guidelines for the VWP.

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